Photographic Representations of

African-Americans in Nature

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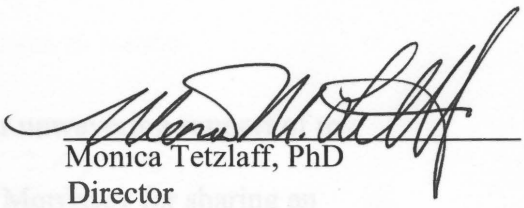

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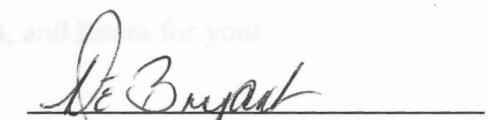

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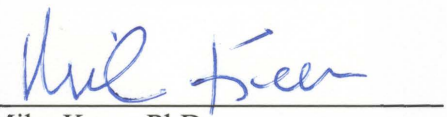

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Prelude to Green

The mainstream environmental movement judges that African Americans, although proven to be interested in environmental issues, do not participate in environmental activities at the same rate as other ethnic populations in the United States. Social scientists develop theories of non-participation that include: security, marginality, ethnicity, prejudice and discrimination—all attempting to explaining why Blacks may not be involved in environmentalism.[1] They may blame this on some form of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs in which caring for the environment would *seem* to be less important to mostly poor African Americans. However, sociologist Paul Mohai, in his work on Black environmentalism, shows that African American concern and participation in environmental activities is equal and in many cases higher than white Americans, and that the above theses that attempt to explain low participation and concern levels, use a distorted definition of environmentalism. This bias against African American participation in environmental activities has had several negative effects. It perpetuates stereotypes about African American association with nature, which, on the contrary, have been represented photographically since the invention of the camera. Additionally, this narrow-mindedness is responsible for the exclusion of African American perspectives, images, or needs from environmental organizations. Finally, these mis-perceptions may

1.Francis O Adeola, "Environmentalism and Risk Perception: Empirical Analyses of Black and White Differentials and Convergence." Society & Natural Resources, 17, no. 10 (2004): 911; "Black Environmentalism." *Social Science Quarterly* 71, no. 4 (1990): 744.

cause African American self-exclusion from nature based activities, and environmental organizations. The following is my story.

Before I was green I was blue. I body surfed in San Diego and longed to ride the azure waves on a surf board. My passion was usually dulled: "Black people don't surf!" almost everyone would remind me.

Surf instructors described my lack of skill on the surf board with stereotypes like, "Black people don't float."

Their prejudices were backed by a lack of images of Black surfers, which then solidified their belief that surfing is an inherently Anglo sport. Although I knew that this perception was entirely incorrect, there *were* no Black surfers to be seen in any surf magazines that I subscribed to. I ignored surfers, parents, and peers and stuck to my interest and desire to ride the waves-- until the day before I canceled my subscription to *Surfer Magazine.*

I had read a passage from a story in Tom Wolfe's, *The Pumphouse Gang,* where a company of surfers ditched the beach because of bad waves and headed to Los Angeles to watch rioters in Watts. For all the writing about the camaraderie of surf culture, the beauty of the ocean, and the responsibility to clean it, the surf world seemed to have no compassion or shared decency toward African Americans.

Still, throughout my teens and into college I remained active in outdoor and mild activist activities like letter writing. Most of the time I was one of a few African Americans in attendance, but not all the time. My scouting group, the Pathfinders, was affiliated with my church and was predominately African American. We camped, sang, hiked and prayed in the local San Gabriel Mountains. My family, like many other African

American families, was raised reducing, reusing and recycling. In fact, I lined my trash cans with old newspaper until I got married in 2003.

In college though, I was convinced that for the Anglo-Americans with whom I participated in nature based activities, issues of civil rights, economic equity and environmental justice would never be as important as tree hugging. The language of the environmentalists that I knew sounded disproportionately heavy on the beauty of the earth, the spirit-laden world of trees, and the heroism of people such as activist and redwood tree resident Julia Butterfly Hill. Eventually, I became resentful of the environmental movement, especially because it seemed to relate only to a desire for white America to hold on to land that wasn't theirs in the first place. Also there seemed to be a disconnect between *mainstream* ideas about who engages with nature, and what *I* knew about this subject.

Thinking back to my surfing days, the question emerged, has the lack of images of African Americans in nature shaped American perceptions and actions of environmentalists? Has the exclusion of African Americans from this visual history of America and its relationship to nature provided incorrect assumptions of our participation in environmental activities?

To answer the last question, this project aims to reveal the role of representation, specifically photographic representation, in shaping Americans' perception of African Americans' involvement with nature. A related goal is to uncover and publicize the rich history of participation among African Americans in nature activities including outdoor recreation and environmental activism, farming, and land preservation. I intend to meet these goals by analyzing and exhibiting photographs of African Americans participating in nature. I examine the types of images that may have shaped notions of African

Americans in nature. Using the fields of history and sociology, I examine examples of mainstream photos from America's past in order to understand how most Americans see African Americans relating to nature. Next, I search for alternative images in order to prove that the mainstream images of the past are not true examples of African Americans' relationship to nature. Finally, with the help of the fine arts (graphic art and photography), I develop both a campaign of images and an online exhibit to counteract past notions about African Americans and our participation in nature.

Wilderness, Terror, and Happy Agriculture: Stereotyped Images of African Americans in Nature

When I was growing up in the suburbs of Southern California, my perceptions of trees were ambiguous. They denoted a security from city violence, a respite for a tired soul, and a sound buffer from nearby, notorious traffic. Being surrounded by too many trees was also a reason for caution.

Here's what I feel about too many trees: they are beautiful; they have nice trunks to hug; participants in the Underground Railroad hid in them. Yet, Confederate soldiers shot escaped slaves from behind them; African Americans were hung from them. While Black churches had revivals among them, the KKK had meetings in the thick of them; if I get lost in them at night, I could die and no one would care. These conclusions are mostly the results of listening to family oral histories, reading slave narratives and seeing photographs of ancestors hanging from tree limbs in civil rights publications like *Ebony's Pictorial History of Black America.*[2]

2. When I was 4 years old, my father bought me Ebony Pictorial History of Black America, Johnson Pub. Co, 1971. It was my first introduction to images of successful African Americans, as well as slaves and lynching victims.

Nature has been represented as a scary place by both abolitionists and racists, by civil rights activists and their segregationist opponents. In an attempt to gain sympathy for slaves escaping plantations, artwork about the Underground Railroad often depicts women and children running through storms and other harsh natural elements. Later, around the turn of the 19th century, postcards of lynchings and the resulting mangled bodies of African Americans were distributed throughout the country. [3] Their goal was to show off supposed moral supremacy of mobs of violent white men, and often contained wilderness, parks or forests as a backdrop.[4] Although lynching photographs burned horrifically in the minds African Americans, the distribution of said photos eventually backfired. Later, human rights activists used the cards as reflections of the inhumanity of racism. Regardless of motives, bigots and humanitarians contributed to a perception of a wilderness in which Black Americans are always in danger.

Meanwhile, Anglo-America began to develop a landscape "idea." Geographer Daniel Cosgrove defined the landscape idea as " . . . a way of seeing — a way in which some Europeans have represented to themselves and to others the world about them and their relationships with it, and through which they have commented on social relations."[5] This idea focused on enjoying, preserving, conquering, and sanctifying nature, and used photography to reflect those ideas. Flags were spiked in cliffs and mountains, and photographic portraits were taken of conservationists in contemplative, and even warrior like stances in the wilderness (Figure 1).

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3 Amy Louise Wood, "Lynching Photography and the Visual Reproduction of White Supremacy," *American Nineteenth Century History* 6, no. 3 (2005) : 373-399.

4. Wood, "Lynching Photography."

5. D. E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape.* Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998; Gareth E. John, "Yellowstone as "Landscape Idea": Thomas Moran and the Pictorial Practices of Gilded-Age Western Exploration." *Journal of Cultural Geography* 24.2 (Spring/Summer 2007), 21.

Figure 1 *Galen Clark at Mariposa Grove*, Careton E. Watkins c1858

As I collected historical photographs of African Americans participating in nature, I observed that before the Great Depression, images of Black bodies could be categorized in three ways: as exploited laborers, lazy workers, or as mangled figures.

These images may have been responsible for dissuading African Americans from utilizing, encompassing, or exploring the wilderness and leaving plantation life. Moreover, Black Americans may have sought strategies to distance themselves from these images. From 1865 to the mid 1920's, African Americans were presented as having a supernatural affinity to agriculture. Photographs, turned into postcards and distributed across the United States, frequently featured African-Americans picking cotton, and happily playing music on plantations. Detroit Publishing photographer William Henry Jackson developed hundreds of images of Black Americans sneaking watermelons, hiding in trees, and working in the fields. Concepts of thievery, gluttony, and "bliss," (figure 2) are seared into the viewer's consciousness with watercolors, as Jackson transforms documentary-style, black and white photos into cartooned caricatures of the plight of African Americans. In these postcards and other photos the viewer misinterprets the dilemma of agricultural labor and poverty as the Shangri-La of African American childhood.

Figure 2 *Bliss* William Henry Jackson c1901

Although the context of African American images in nature began to change during the era of the New Deal, these images were still nurtured in historic stereotypes. Part of President Roosevelt's New Deal included the development of the Farm Security Act that had, among its purposes, an attempt to infuse the farming industry with government resources. The Farm Security Administration was also supposed to document, through photography, the lives of the rural poor. Not only did FSA photographers capture rural deprivation, they also portrayed the faces of domestic migration, urban decay, and the promise of the city. Later in the 1930s, images of African Americans begin to be transformed, in photographs and in other forms of art. At first, however, the FSA and other government agencies continued to exploit popular stereotypes. As Nicolas Natanson explains in *The Black Image in the New Deal*, "images bearing similar implications [of earlier stereotypes] appeared frequently in mass circulation magazines…and Sunday feature sections of newspapers." He continues.

"Amid text that sent mixed signals, these visuals reestablished ground that was familiar to a great many white viewers, not only from film but from advertisements and posters."[6]

Instead of using happy rural stereotypes, documentary photographers began to shoot pictures of a different African America. This Negro was severely oppressed by both whites and upon the land. Natanson calls this portrayal the "Black-as-extreme-victim" image. In Margaret Bourke White's photo book, *Have You Seen Their Faces*, African Americans are captured kneeling, crouching, sitting, and hugging their knees. They are hard pressed by nature, agriculture and the white man and therefore have no way out.[7]

In contrast to the image types of the playfully ignorant and the horribly pathetic, Black studio photography sought to liberate images of African Americans. Photographing on their own, or commissioned by other African Americans, Black studio photographers developed portraits of urban elites. Photographers also caught images of successful urbanites at sorority galas, and fundraisers. Images of the Harlem Renaissance too, provided sophisticated photos of poets, artists, and musicians; and in the age of Jazz, the idea of the "urban negro" began to change the image of African Americans. In the 1950s and 1960s, images from the civil rights movement also conjured a new perception and understanding of what it meant to be Black. Civil rights heroes who gained media attention, like Martin Luther King Jr. and Malcolm X, were seen as urban and suburban sophisticates, savvy enough to take on racial oppression.

With the help of Blaxploitation films of the 1970s negative stereotypes about inner city African American values came to substitute for the hackneyed clichés of the Black experience in nature. "The transformation from the stereotyped Stepin Fetchit to

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6. Nicholas Natanson, *The Black Image in the New Deal: The Politics of FSA Photography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee) 1992, 17.
7. Natanson, *The Black Image*, 26.

Super Nigger on the screen is just another form of cultural genocide," said Junius Griffin, founder of the Coalition against Blaxploitation.[8] Griffin formed his group to defend the African American community against "cultural lies that are all-pervasive in current productions of so-called black movies." Still, half a century later, words from the Blaxploitation era, like "urban" and "inner city," still denote the Black Experience. The mainstream idea of the favorable urban Negro today is articulate, well dressed, unaffected by racism, and too sophisticated to go back to the country. In fact, in Derek Christopher Martin's work, "Apartheid in the Great Outdoors," Martin reveals that, "…Black models are confined to urban and suburban environments (within the pages of magazine advertisements), while Whites have exclusive domain over the Great Outdoors." Martin speculates that this fact has potential "consequences for how Blacks and Whites perceive wilderness recreation and wilderness spaces."[9]

The Real Thing: Alternative Images of African Americans in Nature

Despite images of the favorable urban Negro, many African Americans still stayed close to nature, nurturing farmland for their families and communities, swimming in lakes with close friends, and going on long hikes in National Parks. After surveying historically stereotyped images of African Americans in nature, my second step was to locate accurate photographs of African Americans participating in a range of nature-based activities. Finding diverse representations remedies the dearth of images of African

8. Henry W. McGee III, "Black Movies a New Wave of Exploitation." *The Harvard Crimson,* 10 October, 1972. http://www.thecrimson.com/article.aspx?ref=247069 (accessed August 15, 2009).

9. Derek Christopher Martin, "Apartheid in the Great Outdoors: American Advertising and the Reproduction of a Racialized Outdoor Leisure Identity," *Journal of Leisure Research* 36.4 (2004), 513.

Americans in nature; historical evidence of positive and prolific African American participation with and concern about the environment.

I embarked on a quest to solicit photographs from the private archives, and basement photo albums of African Americans in recreational vehicle clubs, environmental justice groups, park rangers, and even from my own peers. However, like most owners of family history, many were loathe to loan images of their immediate family and ancestors. Some people sent clippings of articles they felt would be beneficial to my project in lieu of personal photos. These were greatly appreciated, but they were not enough.

I looked to several government, and private digital archives to locate the images I needed to deconstruct the perceptions of African Americans' lack of involvement in environmental activities or nature. It developed that my searches had to become creative because of how these images, which do exist, tend to be cataloged: under ethnic categories, and not in subject categories such as "environment," "conservation," or "sustainability."

For example, one particular photo of the 24th Infantry, an all Black Regiment, sent to secure Yosemite National Park in 1899, was discovered by park ranger Shelton Johnson:

> My awareness of this history began the day I wandered into Yosemite's Research Library and found an old photograph... of the 24th Mounted Infantry taken somewhere in Yosemite in 1899. Seeing this photograph was like stumbling into your own family while travelling in a foreign country."[10]

10. Sheldon Johnson. "A History Remembered." *Yosemite National Park.* http://www.nps.gov/archive/yose/nature/articles/buffs.htm (August 1, 2009).

In *Calisphere,* University of California's free public, online gateway to primary sources, the photo can be found easily with the following system of searches:

Calisphere > *California Cultures* > *African Americans* > *Gold Rush Era to 1900;* but not in "*Calisphere* > *Themed Collections* > *1870-1900: Closing of the Frontier* > *Preservation of the West."*

This is an example of how photos, because of perceptions of African American involvement, have been excluded from categories and thus have become impossible to locate.[11] The simultaneous practice of excluding images and bodies of African Americans from green spaces has perpetuated a distortion of the history of parks and outdoor recreation in America. Both northern and southern parks were separated along racial lines, and if the space itself was not separated, then different time periods were assigned in order to accommodate all white, and "colored only" populations separately. For example,

> On November 30, 1932 Arno B. Cammerer, then Deputy Director, National Park Service, added a hand-written note to Director Albright on a typed memorandum about the development of concession facilities in the proposed park: "Provision for colored guests." Three years before Shenandoah was officially established, the groundwork for an official policy of "separate, but equal" accommodations was being established[12]

Additionally, segregated environmental laborers were rarely celebrated on a national scale. So, although the Colored Civilian Conservation Corps "…contributed to the protection, conservation and development of the country's environmental

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11. University of California. *Calisphere: A world of primary sources and more.* http://www.calisphere. universityofcalifornia.edu *(accessed August 15, 2009).*

12. National Park Service, *Segregation / Desegregation: Laboratory for Change.* http://www.nps.gov/shen/historyculture/segregation.htm (accessed March 8, 2009).

resources,"[13] their efforts continue to go on unnoticed--as do those of the patrol of the 24th Infantry in Yosemite, or the pioneering works in agricultural sustainability of African American scientist George Washington Carver.

Despite the marginalization of African Americans in green spaces, and working in green jobs, African Americans did create their own spaces to enjoy and preserve nature. Creative searches in digital libraries revealed that when the definition of "environmental activities," included environmental justice activism, religious ritual, subsistence farming, and "conservation jobs," more images became available. I used the United States Library of Congress' photo archive and the Indiana Memory digital archives extensively.

The best results, however, came from photo storage sites such as Flickr.com. On Flickr, groups converge to create categories of "Vintage African American photos," or "Black History." In these communities, photographers and historians post family photos, antique photos, and even scan important photos from books. On the Flickr site I connected with the photographers, and was allowed to use great images like "Jones Lake," a photo of the photographer as a child with his siblings and mother at a segregated lakefront. Calling photographers across the country was an amazing task. I began to learn that my story of exclusion was similar to their stories of exclusion, and that the story of African American participation in nature is also another story about racism's propensity to distort history.

Reconstructing New Images: Black and Green is Beautiful

Although depictions of African Americans have not dominated the images of the conservation and environmental movements, African Americans should not be left out. In

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13. New Deal Network. *Research and Study*. "African Americans in the Civilian Conservation Corps: Documents." http://newdeal.feri.org/aaccc/ (accessed March 8, 2009).

the 1870s and 1880s, Black Civil War Regiments were deployed to protect green spaces in the West. In the1890s, until his death in 1943, George Washington Carver popularized sustainability in agriculture and educated African American farmers on best practices; and in the 1970s sociologist Robert Bullard, became the father of the Environmental Justice movement.

I was pleased to discover that African Americans in the United States are currently reclaiming areas in the environmental movement where they have been systematically excluded. Macarthur Fellow Majora Carter transformed her Brooklyn neighborhood to include trails and parks; activist Van Jones, author of the *Green Collar Economy*, advocates the development of "green collar" jobs in order to save the planet and provide economic equity to low-income communities. *U.S. News* reports that both Jones and Carter, "try to raise awareness of the fact that the communities most hurt by unsustainable practices are often the poorest. Additionally, in 2009, Van Jones has been appointed Green Jobs Advisor for the Obama administration."[14] Families and organizations have documented their involvement and to some extent many have been aware of the problem surrounding a lack of images. Many have begun to not only to reposition the images of African Americans, but also to connect images of African Americans to the natural environment and the struggle for sustainability.

Audrey Peterman, editor of *Pick Up and Go* magazine, explains her motivation to collect images and stories of African Americans at national parks on her website:

> But, there were no other black people [on our tour of the National Parks] among the employees or visitors! In the entire time, we saw only two other black faces. Many of our friends told us they did not know about the National Parks. We made

14. Maura Judkis, *US News and World Report: Money.* "Fresh Greens: Obama Drafts Jones as Green Advisor." http://www.usnews.com/blogs/fresh-greens/2009/03/10/obama-drafts-van-jones-as-green-jobs-adviser.html (accessed March 29, 2009).

up our minds that we would help to change this situation. We began publishing *Pickup & Go*! toward the end of 1995 to provide information about the National Parks as inviting and affordable destinations for African Americans.[15]

The mission of *Pick Up and Go!* Magazine "is to increase awareness and involvement in safeguarding the environment, particularly among underrepresented groups by providing information which includes a variety of images."[16]

Black Outdoorsman.com is a media venture whose goal is to inspire African Americans to get involved in outdoor recreation. On the magazine's Website, one can peruse several images in the Web gallery categorized by sport. Along with its focus on outdoor recreation, *Black Outdoorsman Magazine* has an "environmental update" section for its concerned subscribers.

In the creative portion of this project, I provide images that do not conjure negative stereotypes, but instead reveal historical and current connections to Black Americans, nature, and environmentalism. I have developed a series of posters, using graphic arts, photography and advertising strategies, which attempt to remind all Americans about the history of African Americans living, working in, and defending the environment. Additionally, the campaign encourages African-Americans to continue to be involved in the environmental movement, and uses pride and beauty as motivators.

There are six posters featuring photographs of men and women and children posing near trees, rivers and in gardens and lakes. At the bottom of the photo are large printed words "Black and Green is Beautiful." Following in smaller font is a brief

15. Audrey Peterman, *Pick Up and Go!* Earthwise Productions, Inc. http://www.pickupandgo.net/about%20us.html (accessed March 29, 2009).

16. Peterman, *Pick Up and Go!*

paragraph describing how the photograph relates to the history of African Americans' participation in the environmental movement.

One image is a collage of local South Bend grower Romeo Martin and agricultural scientist George Washington Carver. I photographed Mr. Martin on a summer day in August. He laughed at the premise of my project because, he says, he's been living sustainably for years. In the poster I have created, the copy reads as follows:

> In the tradition of George Washington Carver, South Bend's Romeo Martin experiments with his garden. He grows melons on the lawn, tries a baseball cap on his scarecrow, and predicts how high over his handcrafted pergola his grapes will grow. He will tell you his wife taught him everything—she's from Arkansas. Yet, a lot of what they know about sustainable agriculture comes from the old school—Tuskegee University. Learn more about African American innovations in agriculture at Tuskegee.edu.

The slogan reads in all capital letters, "Your History is Waiting for You." The remaining five posters are bound by the same theme. I composed this phrase because it suggests African Americans should return to a cultural practice which still exists.

Each poster is branded with a term from the environmental movement lexicon. They include; "sustainability," "preservation," "biodiversity," "environmental justice," "horticulture memory," and "ecology." These terms (located on the edge of each poster in portrait and on the top in each landscape) attempt to link the image and caption with environmental buzzwords. The three items create harmony allowing the viewer to accept African Americans, their history and the environmental movement as a natural event from the past. I look forward to exhibiting these posters in a campaign on the Indiana University South Bend campus as well as on a national scale. However, additional historical research on how the environmental movement marginalized African American participation would clear up issues left out by focusing on images only. Also, regional

photo cooperatives specializing in displaying and collecting images of African Americans participating in the environmental movement would be a significant step in reclaiming a piece of lost history.

Conclusion

Near completion of this project, I began to see places and institutions that have been answering my call for more representation of African Americans in nature. I received an issue of *Nature* magazine with an image of African American children running through a river with butterfly nets on the cover, the State of Indiana's 2009 Travel Guide features an African American family canoeing happily down a river, and continues the use of the same models throughout the brochure. *National Geographic* did a short article on a Brooklyn based farm, and in March 2009, a photo of an African American man accompanied a story on hundreds of blogs, and newspapers about Obama's newly appointed Green Job Czar.

This activity was a little jarring and I began to think that my topic was too late. Cultural theorists such as Stuart Hall, Michele Foucault, and bell hooks (she uses the lower case) have been covering the question of representation of minority groups in art and life for at least 50 years, and I felt my project was redundant.[17] Then, I began a project at work to design an interpretive sign for disc golfers at Ferrettie Baugo Creek County Park in Osceola, Indiana. Although I had stated to my superiors that it was my goal to increase the socio-cultural diversity at the park, my first design for the disc golf sign featured a photo of a white male in a grove of trees. With a sunburst in the

17. Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1997; Michele Foucault, *This is not a Pipe*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983; and bell hooks, *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. Boston, MA : South End Press,1992.

background, he was throwing a disc, as his small black dog watched on. I have since changed the design to feature the African American grandson of a photoblogger in Michigan (figure 3). My compulsion, despite being an African American student in the

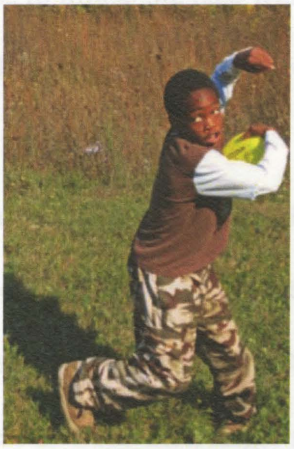

Figure 3 *Tevon Disc Golf*
Offord c2008

midst of completing this MLS project, to exclude fellow African Americans in representation of a park activity was frightening. While it is true that the majority of disc golfers at Ferrettie Baugo Creek County Park are white males, I have personally sold annual disc golf passes to two African American players this year. So I am convinced that images of African Americans in nature are linked to perceptions of participation. Although new images have surfaced that depict positive images of African Americans in nature, positive images of Anglo-Americans in nature are currently, and historically, dominant. As a result, African-Americans may exclude ourselves from participating with nature, believing that certain activities are meant for whites because we don't see ourselves doing them.

Therefore, images of African American must be shared and constructed more often and in more familiar places. My father already does something like this. He finds antique photos of African Americans lawyers, doctors, and soldiers, and puts them on his

mantle as if they were his family. In a way my father is claiming those in the photos and their activities as family. It is a daunting task, but in order to reconstruct our past we must ensure that African American images are not excluded in the same ways they have been in the past. We must also continue to infuse the past with those images of African Americans embracing nature with dignity and care in order to remind ourselves of our diverse relationship with our environment.

From here, this project has begun to take flight. Posters are tentatively scheduled to appear at Indiana University South Bend Library for the 2010 school year. Additionally, the Indiana University South Bend Civil Rights Heritage Center has shown an interest in exhibiting the posters as well. On a larger scale the campaign may be used by our local parks to encourage participation among African Americans in the St. Joseph County Park system. However, St. Joseph County Parks and any other park system would be remiss if it targeted only one marginalized group to include in its campaign for increased cultural diversity. For it is not only African Americans who have been excluded from positive images of participating in nature, or the wilderness. Native Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans have their own rich histories in North America's natural d have been visually skewed by stereotypes. As a result, the Website may be opened in the future to include more photos from other groups that will also assist in changing perceptions about who has been occupying America's wilderness, and natural spaces.

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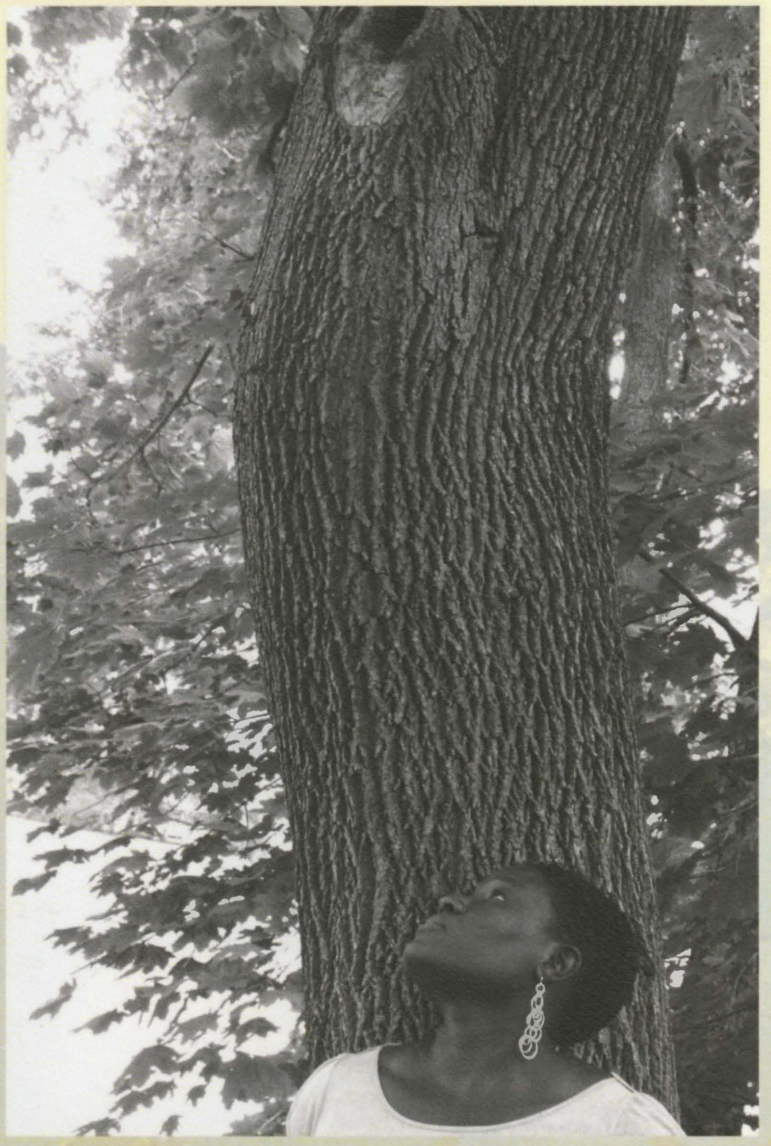
Appendix

Conservation

When they came to Yosemite, they were charged with protecting this place of beauty. The Buffalo Soldiers from the 24th-Regiment may not be famous but they have left a significant legacy at Yosemite National Park. Their story contains the history of all Americans who have lived on this land, traveled through this land, fought on this land and worked on this land. If you want to learn something about all Americans visit one of several of our country's National Parks.

Your History is Waiting For You.

preservation



Nature is our birthright. Ancestors such as Harriet Tubman sought freedom and cultural preservation by following the North Star, and knowing the difference between the rustling of leaves and the footsteps of horses.

Your History is Waiting For You.

sustainability

Indiana sculptor Jake Webster waits. A birch tree grows, a machine cuts it down and Webster gives a lonely trunk new life. Learn more about Webster's work at www.jakewebster.org.

Your History is Waiting For You.

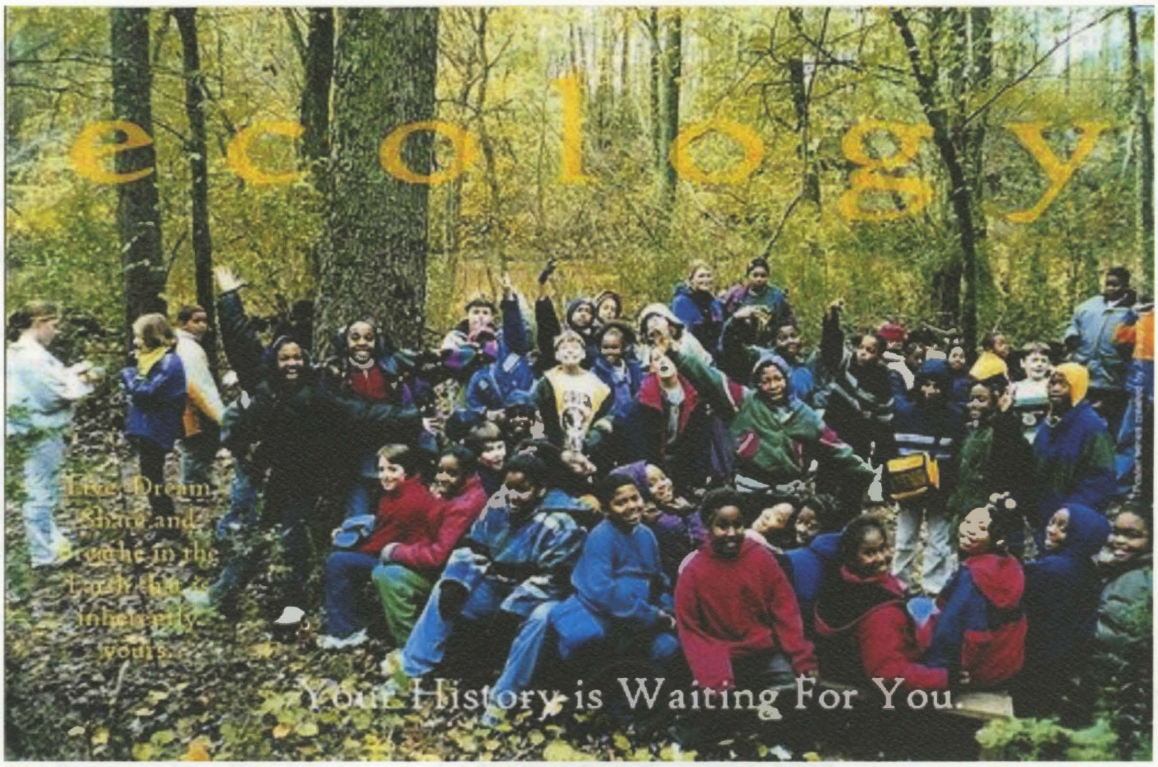
horticulture memory

In the tradition of George Washington Carver, Romeo Martin experiments with his garden. He grows melons on the lawn, tries a cap on his scarecrow, and predicts how high his grapes will grow over his pergola.

"I learned everything I know from my wife—she's from Arkansas," he says.

Much of what they both know is from the Tuskegee Institute, the old school. Luckily the Martins are around to re-teach us the roots.

Your History is Waiting For You.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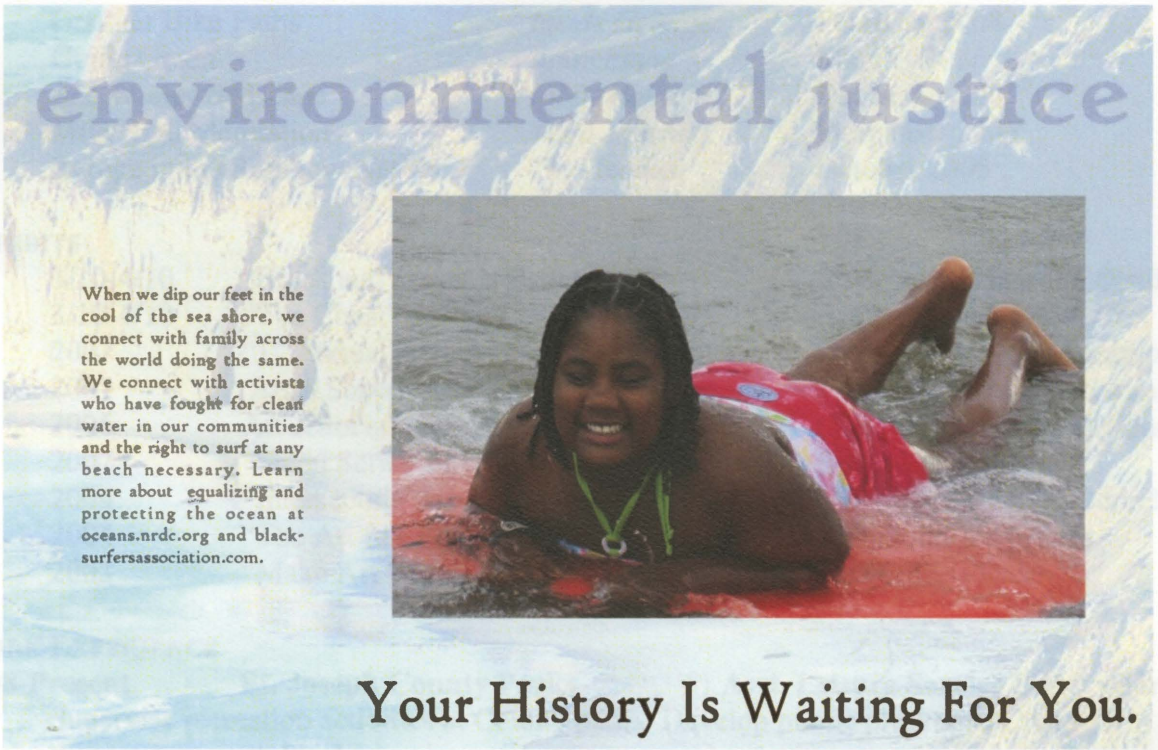
environmental justice
When we dip our feet in the cool of the sea shore, we connect with family across the world doing the same. We connect with activists who have fought for clean water in our communities and the right to surf at any beach necessary. Learn more about equalizing and protecting the ocean at oceans.nrdc.org and black-surfersassociation.com.
Your History Is Waiting For You.